

NUTRITION

What are dietary supplements?

Traditionally, dietary supplements referred to products made of one or more of the essential nutrients, such as vitamins, minerals and protein. The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) broadened the definition to include, with some exceptions, any product intended for ingestion as a supplement to the diet. This includes vitamins, minerals, herbs, botanicals, and other plant-derived substances and amino acids and concentrates, metabolites, constituents and extracts of these substances.

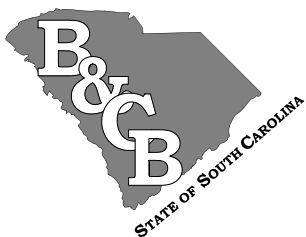
Surveys show that more than half of the U.S. adult population uses these products. In 1996 alone, consumers spent more than \$6.5 billion on dietary supplements, according to Packaged Facts Inc. a market research firm in New York City. Dietary supplements can be beneficial when used as directed. To become a more informed consumer here are a few tips to help you avoid fraudulent products.

Fraudulent Products

Consumers need to be on the lookout for fraudulent products. These are products that don't do what they say they can or don't contain what they say they contain. Possible indicators of fraud are:

- Uses a claim that says the supplement is a secret cure. If a product were a cure for a serious disease it would be widely reported in the media.
- Uses "pseudomedical" jargon such as detoxify, purify and energize to describe a product's effects. These claims are vague and hard to measure.
- Claims that the product can cure a wide range of unrelated diseases.

Consumers who use dietary supplements should always read product labels, follow directions and heed all warnings. Supplement users who suffer a serious harmful effect or illness that they think is related to supplement use should call a doctor and the FDA MedWatch at 1-800-FDA-1088.



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